

1

A GENERAL APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH

Introduction

In this chapter we define success in English language teaching and learning. That involves deciding on valid goals for English language courses. The development of an ability to communicate in English must be a major goal of any effective course. We present a general model of English language teaching (ELT) that integrates the use of English as the main classroom language from the start, appropriate focus on language, and regular communicative activities. For any approach to work, certain conditions are essential, such as dynamic lessons and motivation. Specific teaching–learning situations also have to be taken into account.

Recognizing success in teaching English

Many institutions and teachers have a reputation for real success in teaching English. Others have a poor reputation. For example, some people will tell you they learnt a lot of English at their school. Others will say they studied for three, four, or five years or more, and learnt almost nothing. The main test for real success in teaching and learning should be whether or not the learners can communicate at all in English. Can they understand instructions in class, or questions in an interview, or talks at a conference? Can they ask for directions in the street, or provide personal information, or explain business proposals? Can they understand simple articles, or business letters, or technical books? Can they complete application forms, or write letters or reports? Can they pass recognized examinations in English, like the UCLES exams or the TOEFL tests?

We can all recognize such real, practical success in teaching and learning English. We know success is not just being able to repeat memorized sentences or complete grammar exercises—though they may contribute to learning. Success is not the same as getting an 8, 9, or 10 in course tests—

though that may indicate some progress. It is the ability of learners to use English effectively in real communication situations.

Teachers and teaching

Successful teachers and the institutions where they teach may differ in many ways. For example, in the teachers' experience, training, and level of English, or the size of classes, hours of class per week, and the methodology and materials used. However, successful teachers tend to have certain things in common. They usually:

- 1 have a practical command of English, not just a knowledge of grammar rules
- 2 use English most of the time in every class, including beginners' classes
- 3 think mostly in terms of learner practice, not teacher explanations
- 4 find time for really communicative activities, not just practice of language forms
- 5 focus their teaching on learners' needs, not just on 'finishing' the syllabus or coursebook.

As far as point 1 is concerned, a teacher's development of a command of English should be a life-long hobby as well as a professional obligation. Of course, a knowledge of the rules and terminology of English grammar and vocabulary is also useful. But teaching, especially language teaching, is much more than just the transfer of knowledge. If teachers follow point 2, this means that their learners constantly experience the real communicative use of English. It increases their exposure to the language through listening comprehension, and gives them opportunities to speak English. Point 3 relates to two general observations about teaching and learning languages. First, explanations often become long, complicated discussions in the learners' native language (often referred to as their *L1*), which may leave little time for the practice and use of English. Second, most people seem to learn much more from use of a language than from explanations about it. Point 4 again recognizes that language learning is essentially about communication. And point 5 puts the learners at the centre of teaching. Your success as a teacher is based entirely on their success as learners.

Co-ordination of English language departments

Most institutions where teaching is generally successful have systems to set standards related to the five points discussed above. For example, there is careful selection of teachers. Their work is co-ordinated by means of meetings and seminars, class observation, materials, and tests. All the teachers are in general agreement about principles, goals, and methodology. There is continuity in the courses and co-operation among the teachers.

Obviously, it is better for teachers to teach and learners to study in such institutions. But even in a poorly co-ordinated institution teachers can begin to change things by teaching their own classes as effectively as they can. If they then establish some co-operation with one or two other teachers, they have started something important.

Questions

(Use your experience as a learner to answer these questions if you are not yet teaching.)

Do you agree that successful English teachers usually speak English in class?
Do you agree that they give much more time to practice than to explanation?
Do you agree that teacher co-operation in an English language department is important?

Establishing goals and objectives in teaching English

The absence of clear or appropriate goals in education is bad for both teachers and learners. At school, children and adolescents often seem to be required to study algebra, or Roman history, or English, only because these subjects are on the official curriculum and there are tests to pass. This can have a very negative effect on the learners' attitude towards these subjects. The clear definition of appropriate goals is vital to successful English language teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, not everyone recognizes real success in English language learning. Some teachers and learners do not look beyond the grammar and vocabulary currently being practised, or the next test. Also, the long-term goals of teaching are not always explicit in course syllabuses. In fact, course syllabuses, materials, and tests sometimes seem to present only a sequence of short-term objectives. Although short-term objectives are important in giving learners and teachers a feeling of making progress, it is important never to lose sight of the overall long-term goal of English language teaching, to enable learners to communicate effectively, and as far as possible accurately, in English. We will look at goals and objectives in more detail in Chapter 8.

Variations in course goals

English is taught as a foreign language in very different contexts around the world—to schoolchildren and working adults, in small and large groups, for three hours or ten hours a week. Obviously, the goals of English courses vary according to the contexts in which they are taught.

The goals of different courses may be, or at least may appear to be, any of the following:

- 1 to enable the learners to communicate in real English, both spoken and written
- 2 to enable the learners to read technical publications in real English
- 3 to get the learners to memorize English grammar rules and vocabulary.

We use the expression 'real English' in 1 and 2 to refer to the English used both inside and outside language classrooms: for example the English of instructions, conversations, magazines, books, airports, and the Internet. In contrast, the information about English grammar rules and vocabulary in 3 is often presented, practised, and tested in 'unreal English'. The language in the exercises and tests would seem strange to native speakers, or even confuse them. Working with 'unreal English' may give learners some useful foundations in grammar and vocabulary, but it is a long way from the use of English for real communication.

Ideally, the goal of most English language courses would be like that in 1: to develop a general command of 'real English' for use outside the classroom. If learners can communicate effectively when hearing, reading, speaking, and writing 'real English', they will manage in almost any English language situation they meet outside the classroom. But, in many contexts, factors such as the shortage of time or the large number of learners in a class make this goal seem difficult or impossible to reach. When time is short, one common response is to limit the goal to what is considered most important for the learners. For example, in 2 the goal has been intentionally limited to reading technical publications. In higher education, reading is often considered the most important skill to master.

In very difficult conditions, for example large, unmotivated groups with little time, a common response is to work towards a goal like that in 3. The goal in the official syllabus may be more like that in 1 or 2, but in practice teachers find it easier to explain English grammar and give rules and formulas for learners to memorize. However, we believe it is possible to work towards communicative goals like those in 1 or 2, even in quite difficult teaching contexts. With a group of fifteen motivated learners for five hours a week, you can easily work towards the goals in 1. With a group, or many groups, of forty initially unmotivated learners for two hours a week, goals like those in 1 will present a much greater challenge and results will inevitably be modest. But we have seen many teachers working communicatively with groups of forty or more secondary-school learners—those notorious 'difficult' adolescents—and achieving good results.

What are 'good results'? Well, when you observe a class, the first sign of good teaching is the attention and interest shown by the learners. If they are

voluntarily paying attention, something good is probably happening. If they are showing clear interest—listening eagerly, following instructions, asking and answering questions, mostly in English—something very good is probably happening. Holding the learners' attention, getting their interest and their active participation, are essential in English language teaching, as in all teaching. If you do not achieve these immediate objectives in each lesson, you are unlikely to reach the long-term goals of getting learners to master the elements and systems of English and use them in communication.

Last, but not least, your teaching goals and objectives should be apparent to the learners. They should feel that every activity you do with them is worthwhile, and that the whole course is worthwhile. They should never feel that you are just filling time until the bell rings to end the class, or that you are going mechanically through the book or syllabus. Not all short-term objectives will be directly related to communicating in English. For example, you may decide that it is useful to get the learners to memorize some irregular verb forms, or find and underline all the conjunctions in a reading text. But this kind of short-term objective is really worthwhile only when it contributes towards achieving the main goal of teaching English—to develop an active repertoire of English for use outside the classroom. If you or the learners lose sight of this main goal, their motivation for learning English as a foreign language is likely to weaken.

Questions

What was the best foreign language course you have ever taken?
Why was it better than other courses (think about the teacher, the group, the book, and the activities)?
Did you feel that you were really learning to communicate in the language?

Communication first and last

If communication in English is to be perceived by the learners as the main goal of the course, English should be used for real communication in the classroom as much as possible. This means introducing some of the English needed for genuine communication early in the course, for example, that needed for routine greetings, instructions, and requests. And, depending on the overall objectives of the course, as much time as possible should also be given to realistic work on the language skills that the learners need to master, for example, conversation, reading comprehension, or written composition.

This may mean seeing your course syllabus in a new way. It may seem on the surface that the most important element in the syllabus is a sequence of new

language items. However, if you look more carefully, you will probably find that you are also expected to enable the learners to communicate in real situations. You may also find that you are expected to run the class mostly in English, avoiding complicated discussion of the new language items in the learners' native language.

To do this successfully, especially with beginners, you will need techniques that allow you to focus on new language items without using the learners' first language much. We will be looking at some of these in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. You will also need techniques for establishing and developing English as the main classroom language, for if you simply 'speak English all the time' you will quickly drive beginners, and even more advanced learners, to despair!

English as the main classroom language

Among the many possible uses of English in the classroom are:

- greetings and farewells, for example: 'Good morning. How are you?'; 'See you tomorrow.'
- instructions, for example: 'Open your books at page sixty-two. Look at the picture.'
- enquiries, for example: 'Can you see, David? Would you like to move over here?'
- feedback, for example: 'That's interesting, Maria. Very good.'
- chat, for example, calling roll: 'Tony . . . No? Where is he today? Does anyone know?'

Many of these interactions recur naturally, class after class. They can quickly become routines for the learners, just as they would learn common interactions if they were living in an English-speaking country. Some teachers try to introduce English in the classroom little by little, using the learners' first language most of the time at first. This is rather like trying to give up smoking little by little—it hardly ever works. One of your first objectives in an English language course, even with beginners, should be to establish English as the main classroom language.

Teaching ideas

Here are some of the most useful techniques for presenting new English expressions for use in the classroom:

- **Demonstration with actions and objects**
For example, close your own book as you say 'Close your books', hold up a sheet of paper as you say 'Take a sheet of paper, one sheet of paper', or draw columns on the board as you say 'Draw three columns like this'.

- **Gesture and mime**

For example, make the typical gesture with your hand as you say ‘Stand up’, ‘Come here’, or ‘Sit down’; mime writing as you say ‘Write the answers’, or mime distributing things as you say ‘Please give out these photocopies’.

- **Paraphrase**

Use a *cognate* expression, that is, one similar to an expression in the learners’ first language—for example, ‘That’s correct’ helps Spanish learners understand ‘That’s right’, and ‘Excellent’ helps them understand ‘Very good’.

- **Translation into English**

For example, learners may say in their L1 ‘What does that mean?’, ‘I don’t understand’, or ‘Will you repeat that?’ You can put the English versions of such useful expressions on cards on the wall and point to them when necessary. Add cards for new expressions as you introduce them.

- **Translation**

Give the translation of the new expression the first time you use it, but after that get a learner to demonstrate or, if necessary, translate.

Constant, consistent use of routine classroom expressions in English soon gets learners accustomed to them. Once your learners are familiar with an expression, stop supporting it with demonstration, gesture, mime, paraphrase, or translation. However, remember that if classroom language becomes too varied too soon, it can overwhelm some learners and demotivate them. To start with, control the range of language you use: speak naturally, but fairly slowly and carefully. You would probably do the same outside the classroom with non-native speakers of your language. Increase the range and speed of classroom English gradually as learners advance.

Of course, with groups that share a first language, occasional use of it is appropriate, for example:

- to discuss briefly feelings about the course, progress, and plans
- to clarify ideas or instructions that are more complex than usual
- to make a useful comparison between English and the first language.

And you can never entirely stop the learners comparing English with their first language and translating in their own heads. This is both natural and beyond your control.

In some cases it may seem impossible to cover the syllabus using English most of the time. But the important question is whether ‘covering the syllabus’ using the learners’ first language most of the time really produces worthwhile learning. At the end of the course, can they actually *do* anything with English—understand it or express themselves in it effectively to some

degree? If they cannot, you may have nothing to lose and a lot to gain by switching from their first language to English as the main classroom language. You can often motivate learners towards this switch by discussing it briefly with them—in their first language, of course.

Of course, using English as the main classroom language can be a learning opportunity and a challenge for non-native teachers of English as well as for learners. The teachers practise their own English more, but may also make a few mistakes. For example, speakers of many languages often say *‘Very well’ instead of ‘Very good’, and *‘I want that you work in pairs’ instead of ‘I want you to work in pairs’. Many teachers may need to do a little research into classroom English (we have listed some useful books in the Sources and Further Reading section at the end of this book). But a few mistakes are far outweighed by the benefits of using English in the classroom: it can get learners to feel that they are really using English for a purpose.

Routine communicative activities

If you take all the natural opportunities to use English for communication in the classroom, you remind the learners of the main goal of the course. If you create additional opportunities, you send an even stronger message. If you do not take and make such opportunities, you send them the message that the purpose of the course is just to learn information about the language and pass tests. This means that many learners are likely to lose motivation and see English as just another compulsory subject in the academic curriculum.

One regular opportunity for an extra communicative activity is the ‘warm-up’ at the beginning of each lesson. Some teachers begin most lessons with a review of the language items practised in the previous lesson. This approach—almost always starting lessons with a focus on language—tends to make learners see the learning of language forms, structures, and rules as the main purpose of the course. The teaching seems to be directed towards short-term objectives only—learning one item after another for the next test. Instead, you can start lessons with real communication in English. Without focusing obviously on any specific language forms, engage the learners in a simple communicative activity, using language they already know. Here are some examples of communicative warm-ups. They are all suitable for elementary-level classes, but the last ones require more English than the first ones. They should each take from five to ten minutes.

Teaching ideas

- Go through a flexible conversational routine with the group, for example:

Teacher Good morning. How are you today?
Learners Fine, thank you. And you?
Teacher So-so. You're happy this morning, Ana.
Learner 1 Yes . . . er . . . my birthday.
Teacher Ah, it's your birthday! How old are you?
Learner 1 Fourteen.
Teacher Congratulations! Is there another birthday this week?
 No? Just Ana? Well . . . what's the date today?
Learner 2 It's Thursday, March 14th.
Teacher Right. Who can write that on the board?

- Tell the group about a pet—for example, the kind of animal, its name, size, colour, age, and what it eats. Then say you—or a relative—have another pet, and invite the learners to ask questions, for example, 'What kind of animal is it?'; 'What is its name?' Then write the start of a conversation on the board:

A Have you got a pet?
B Yes, I have./No, I haven't.
A Has one of your relatives got one?
B Yes, my _____ has one.

Get the learners to talk about pets in pairs using the conversation on the board as a guide. Afterwards, ask about the most unusual pets.

The same basic idea can be used with other topics, for example, a neighbour, or a relative living in another city—but asking about where they work or study, not what they eat! It can even be used about a bicycle or car.

- Ask one or two learners about something they did last weekend using question-words like 'what', 'where', 'who with', and 'why'. Then get learners to ask you about something you did last weekend. Finally, get the learners to talk in pairs, starting: 'What was the most interesting thing you did last weekend?' The same idea can be used about other topics such as 'on your last holiday' and 'last year'—or plans for next weekend.
- Distribute pictures cut out from recent magazines to pairs of learners. Get pairs to discuss questions such as who the people are, where they are, what they are doing, why they are in the news, and anything else the learners know about them.

A third way of emphasizing the communicative goal of a course is to include at least one communicative skills activity (see Chapters 5 and 6) in every

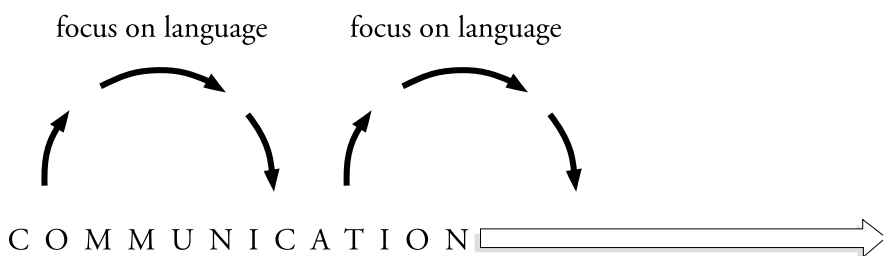
lesson. This may require a special effort on your part. The presentation, practice, and review of language items take up a lot of time in many courses, and your syllabus, course materials, and tests may make little or no provision for skills work. In that case, you will have to find activities yourself. It is important to respond to this challenge if your teaching is to be really effective.

A general model of English teaching

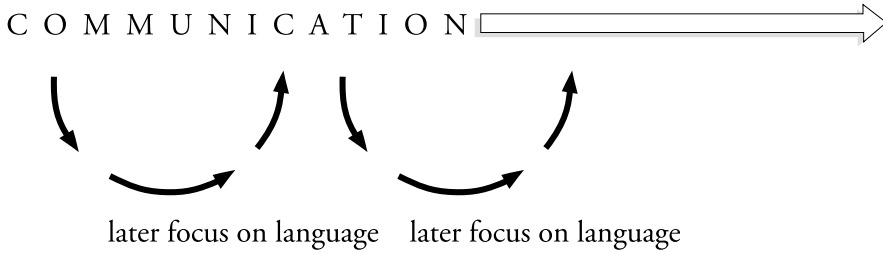
Throughout this chapter so far, we have been emphasizing communication as the starting point of an English language course as well as the main goal of teaching English. This makes English language teaching look like a simple ‘communication highway’:

TEFL =
C O M M U N I C A T I O N  GOAL

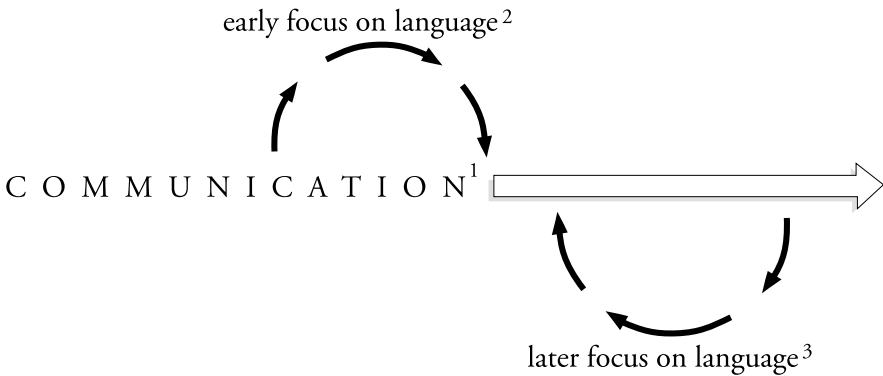
But we have also recognized that a sequence of new language items is usually a major element in course syllabuses. Each item is to be presented, practised, and somehow incorporated into a growing repertoire of English. This cycle is often described as ‘Presentation-Practice-Production’ (usually shortened to PPP). This is a useful and widely-recognized model of language teaching. It can be added to the ‘communication highway’ view of English language teaching as a series of ‘PPP loops’:



We also said that learning how to communicate effectively and accurately in English is a long-term project, and that even basic errors persist in learners’ conversation and writing for a long time. Learners do not often grasp new items perfectly and permanently at first. They usually need a lot of further work, often long after first presentation and practice. We can add this to the ‘communication highway’ too:



With communication as the beginning and end of teaching and learning English, but ‘presentation and practice of new language loops’ and ‘language review and-error-correction loops’ as important elements, we have a complete model of English teaching which can help us see the complex process of teaching more clearly.



Our discussion of the methodology of teaching English has already begun in this chapter. We have said that it is important to begin by establishing English as the main classroom language, and to take and make every opportunity to involve the learners in its use for communication (1 in the model). In Chapters 2, 3, and 4 we shall be looking at ways of working on new language items in the syllabus (2 in the model). Then in Chapters 5 and 6 with developing communicative skills (continuing 1 in the model, but also contributing to 3). In Chapter 7 we look at previously encountered language (3 in the model).

Of course, although a clear model or approach to teaching is very useful, it is a simplification and an idealization. Reality is more complex, and any model needs adapting to specific teaching situations. Also, certain conditions are necessary for any approach to teaching to work adequately in practice.

Creating conditions for learning

Certain classroom conditions help a lot in the teaching of any subject: for example, sufficient space, a group that is not too big, adequate lighting, and a room with good acoustics that is neither too hot nor too cold. But good material conditions do not ensure successful learning, and poor material conditions do not necessarily prevent it. More important for successful language teaching and learning are other, less tangible, conditions, for example, plenty of opportunities for learners to participate in class and an atmosphere in which they feel motivated to learn. Teachers can often do more about the intangible conditions than the material ones.

Learner participation

Groups of learners vary greatly. Some are all you could wish for, but others are hard to control or direct, or passive and difficult to inspire. Getting and keeping your learners' attention and their positive participation may be one of your greatest challenges. And it is not always the most energetic teachers that create the most dynamic lessons. They may do a lot themselves, but get the learners to do very little. Even during an 'explanation' phase in a lesson, you can involve the learners actively rather than making them listen passively. Here is an example of *elicitation*, in other words, asking the learners questions so that they actively discover English grammar rather than just being told about it:

- Teacher [pointing to a group of adjectives on the board] Which of these adjectives use 'more'?
- Learner 1 'Expensive', 'comfortable', 'modern' . . .
- Learner 2 . . . 'attractive'.
- Teacher Right—'expensive', 'comfortable', 'modern', and 'attractive'. And which use '-er'?
- Learner 3 'Big', 'cheap' . . .
- Learner 4 . . . 'old' . . .
- Learner 5 . . . 'small'.
- Teacher Right. How are these two types of adjective different?
- Learner 2 'Big', 'cheap', 'old', 'small', are . . . um . . . small, one-syll—um . . .
- Teacher Exactly—one-syllable adjectives. And they form the comparative with . . . ?
- Learner 6 '-er'—'bigger', 'cheaper' . . .
- Teacher That's right. And 'more' is used with . . .
- Learner 1 Long adjectives—'more expensive', 'more comfortable' . . .
- Teacher Right. Let's put that on the board in two columns—adjective plus '-er' on the left, and 'more' plus adjective on the right.

In the above example, the interaction pattern is ‘teacher → learner/s’. This is the commonest pattern of interaction in most classrooms. Often it takes the form of ‘teacher explanation → learner silence’ or ‘teacher model → learner choral repetition’. But these involve the learners much less than the ‘teacher question → learner response’ pattern above. However, offering opportunities for learners to participate actively in lessons does not always get a positive response. Some teachers despair, saying ‘I’ve asked questions, I’ve set tasks, I’ve put the learners in pairs and groups—I’ve tried everything—but they just sit there and say and do nothing.’ If learners are to participate willingly in class they must understand what is expected of them. Questions, activities, and pair or groupwork should be carefully planned to enable learners to participate. You should ask yourself questions like ‘Do the learners know the English needed for the activity?’ and ‘Have I explained clearly what they have to do?’

Even when the learners know the necessary English and what to do in an activity, they will not participate if they lack confidence. They must not be afraid to speak up in front of you and other learners. It takes time to build up confidence, and it comes initially from your example and leadership. You set the tone for all classroom behaviour through your own reactions to learner participation, the way you encourage the learners and deal with problems. Most learners will not want to participate if you say ‘No! Wrong!’ every time they make a mistake, or ‘Come on! Come on!’ every time they hesitate. And weaker learners will not risk humiliation if you turn in exasperation to a better learner every time they falter.

When you start teaching a new group, you need to spend some time on helping them get used to your way of doing things. It is best, first of all, to use simple activities and then move on to more complex ones. Frequent activities in pairs and groups are good for building confidence. Especially for shy learners, they offer a less threatening environment than whole-class work.

Motivation

Most teachers consider motivation essential for successful language learning. However, motivation is difficult to define and measure. Are all learners motivated by worthwhile goals and clear objectives, the constant use of English in the classroom, a variety of activities and interactions, and sensitive handling of errors and hesitations? Our assumption has been that they are. But we recognize that motivation is a complex phenomenon, and not all learners respond to teaching in the same way.

Certain aspects of motivation may be beyond your influence. Some learners come to a course needing English immediately for study or work, or wanting to learn it because they love ‘Anglo–American culture’. Others may be more

reluctant, but know they are likely to need English in the future. Yet others are obliged to take a course, but have no desire to learn English, and a sincere hope they will never need to use it. With the first type of learner, the challenge is to maintain and exploit the motivation they bring to the course. With the last type, the challenge is to work hard at making the course itself enjoyable and satisfying. You also have to try to get reluctant learners to recognize that, for virtually anyone, English really could be useful at some time in their lives.

Even for initially reluctant learners, appropriate goals and objectives can give direction and the will to work—in other words, improve motivation. And any success in real communication can motivate. But ‘an ability to communicate effectively in English’ is such a huge, ill-defined goal, quite remote for most elementary learners. Worthwhile and achievable short-term objectives can give the learners satisfaction and a sense of success as they work towards the main goal of their course.

Even the most carefully planned activities will normally motivate learners only if they are related to their interests, needs, and aspirations. You should try to find out what these are and plan lessons accordingly. For example, teenage learners may want some work on communicating in English via the Internet, or activities using popular songs. It is a good idea to consult with your learners about topics and activities, and get them to bring to class materials they are interested in.

Topics can be a rich source of motivation in the English language classroom. There are topics of personal interest, for example, music, films, cars, computers, the Internet, pets, and sports. If your learners are interested in Britain, the USA, or another English-speaking country, a coursebook with that country as the main theme can provide a good supply of topics. You may also be able to use authentic materials from those countries, for example, magazine and newspaper articles, cassettes of songs, and videos of television programmes.

Of course, English does not ‘belong’ to any specific countries, societies, or cultures. These days, there are more non-native than native speakers of English and it is more often used between two non-native speakers than between a non-native and a native speaker. This cosmopolitan perspective, common in several more recent coursebooks, appeals to many learners and is a rich source of topics for activities and lesson themes. Again, you may be able to use authentic materials, including any English-language newspapers published in your own country.

Personalities and relationships are important for motivation. Your personality is bound to appeal to some learners more than others. You cannot totally change yourself, but you can modify or develop some things.

For example, you can use the learners' names and show a personal interest in them, and take care to behave in a fair way towards all learners alike. You can also educate yourself in topics that interest your learners, for example, pop music and films for teenagers, new cars and technical developments for mechanics.

Although, ideally, learners should be motivated by an awareness of their own progress, many will rely mostly on your feedback. It can be very motivating for them if you tell them clearly that you are pleased with their effort and progress. It may even be a wonderful surprise after frequent expressions of dissatisfaction from previous teachers!

Summary

In Chapter 1 we have considered the following points:

Recognizing success in teaching English. Real success in English language teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English inside and outside the classroom. Successful teachers and institutions differ in many ways, but tend to have certain things in common. Among these are routine communication in English in class, an emphasis on practice rather than explanation, and co-operation among teachers.

Establishing goals and objectives in teaching English. A major goal of all English language teaching should be to enable learners to use English effectively, and as far as possible accurately, in communication. Memorizing language forms and rules is valid as a short-term objective, but not as a main goal. Where time is short and groups large, goals may be limited, for example, to reading technical publications, but they should still involve communication. Some immediate objectives will not be communicative in themselves, but should clearly contribute to the development of communicative ability. Learners should feel there is a worthwhile purpose to each activity and the whole course. Among the most important objectives of every lesson is engaging the learners' attention and interest.

Communication first and last. The communicative goal of a course should be ever-present. It should be emphasized from the start by establishing English as the main classroom language. This requires careful management and the use of specific techniques. Regular communicative activities, such as warm-ups, also emphasize the communicative nature and goal of a course. Communicating in English and learning the English language go hand in hand.

A general model of English teaching. Communication should be the main goal of all English teaching, but the presentation and practice of new language items is a major element in most syllabuses. We must also recognize that learning language items and systems and eliminating errors is a long-term

project. These three elements—communication, new language, and continuing work on old language—can be integrated into a general model with a ‘communication highway’ and presentation-practice and review-remedial loops. A model can help us see a complex process more clearly, but it is a simplification and idealization. It must be adapted to specific situations.

Creating conditions for learning. Material conditions are not as important for successful learning as other, less tangible, conditions such as opportunities for learners to participate in class, and an atmosphere in which they feel motivated to learn. Lessons should be dynamic, involving the learners in varied activities and interactions. Learners should be active, not just listen and repeat. To participate willingly, they must feel able and confident, not threatened by failure, reprimand, or ridicule. You must take the lead in establishing a positive atmosphere, planning appropriate activities, encouraging learners and dealing with problems sensitively. Motivation is essential for learning. Some types of motivation are brought or not brought to the course by learners, for example, a real need for English. Others can be promoted or created by you—for example, enjoyment of topics, activities, and interactions. Your relationship and rapport with the group and individual learners is also very important.

Project

Focusing on classroom English

Purpose: To specify the repertoire of English for an elementary classroom.

Procedure:

- 1 Select and study part of a lesson from an elementary coursebook.
- 2 List the English expressions you think you would need to teach the lesson. You can write out a probable script for the lesson if you wish.
- 3 Where you are in doubt, check the grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of the expressions (in a grammar book or dictionary, or with a native-speaker).
- 4 Consider how you would present the meaning of some of these expressions to the learners if you were introducing them for the first time.
- 5 If you are actually going to teach the lesson, note how the learners respond to your greetings, instructions, and comments. You could even record part of the lesson on an audio-cassette and listen to it at home.